

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, RELIGIOUS REVIVAL, AND THE NATIONALIST MOVEMENT IN EAST TIMOR, 1975-98

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'We have nothing left to lose. We are human beings and they have treated us like insects. We will never accept them here. Even if we have to die resisting, we will resist. We have our dignity and our own identity. And God is with us!'

(Quoted in Catholic Institute for International Relations News, No.27, October 1993, p.4)

Introduction

The words quoted above were spoken by an old woman in East Timor to a Western visitor in 1993 (Archer, 1995:120). In their quiet defiance and desperation, they underscore the faith which has sustained the people of East Timor in their twenty-three-year struggle against Indonesian military occupation. At the heart of this struggle has been the East Timorese Catholic Church, a Church which has undergone a remarkable transformation since the mid-1970s from an institution closely linked to the Portuguese colonial order to one which has discovered a new sense of mission as a Church of service, a people's Church able to articulate and defend the interests of the Timorese people. Nowhere is this transformation more evident than in the person of the current Bishop, Mgr Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo (born 1948; in office as Apostolic Administrator, May 1983-June 1988, and as Bishop, June 1988 to present), a fifty-one-year-old Timorese Salesian who was appointed Apostolic Administrator in May 1983 as an impressionable young priest recently graduated from the Pontifical University in Rome, and who has now, over the past decade, become one of the most effective spokesman for the rights of the Timorese people. In recognition of his outstanding personal courage and commitment to the peaceful resolution of the Timor issue, he was awarded the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize, along with José Ramos-Horta, the special representative of the National Council of Maubere Resistance (CNRM)—post-April 1998 the National Council of Timorese Resistance (CNRT)—the umbrella organization of the East Timorese resistance movement abroad.

The colonial legacy

The history of the Portuguese in Timor and eastern Indonesia, especially the islands of Solor and Flores in present-day Nusa Tenggara Timur (site of late sixteenth-century Dominican-built fortresses at Fort Henrique and Larantuka) was closely bound up with the Catholic Church. Indeed, until the formal separation of secular and religious authority in 1701, which immediately preceded the establishment of the seat of the first Portuguese Governor at Lifau (present-day Oecussi [Oe-Kussi]) in 1702, the Portuguese presence in Timor was largely represented by Dominican and Jesuit missionaries and their mixed race ('Black Portuguese' or 'Topasse' [from the Gujarati *tupassi*: 'interpreter']) allies. The dual role of these missionaries as both priests and military commanders caused serious difficulties for the fledgling Portuguese administration eventually forcing its transfer to Dili in 1769 after the destruction of Lifau by a Dominican-allied Topasser force (Neonbasu, 1992: 66).

Parallel with their involvement in domestic politics and military affairs, the missionaries also set up schools, seminaries, and monasteries, through which certain sections of the local population gained limited access to Christian teachings and the dissemination of secular knowledge. By 1909, there were 17 such Church-run schools in East Timor with 1,035 students (Ranck, unpublished: 55), and both the Dominicans and Jesuits were active in introducing new agricultural techniques, as well as improving stockbreeding and food production (Catholic Commission, 1993: 21). After a period of abeyance in the mid-nineteenth (1834-74) and early twentieth century (1910-20), when anti-clerical governments in Portugal caused the temporary banishment of missionary orders from the Portuguese colonies, the Catholic Church began to expand once again in what was now Portuguese East Timor—the final boundary agreement with the Dutch in West Timor having been agreed in 1914. Missionary involvement in education led to the foundation of the first diocesan seminary, the Seminário de Nossa Senhora de Fátima (Seminary of Our Lady of Fatima), in Soibada in 1937 (based on the post-1904 primary school for training Catholic school teachers), an institution which was later to become famous as the *alma mater* of many of the key Timorese nationalist leaders, especially within the radical nationalist Fretilin (Frente Revolucionária de Timor-Leste Independente) party. By then it had moved to Daré (1951) on the hills overlooking the colonial capital, Dili, where it was run (from 1958) by the Jesuits, who remained until its destruction by Indonesian naval guns in December 1975 at the time of Jakarta's invasion (Dunn, 1983: 52-53).

The Concordat and Missionary Agreements signed by the Portuguese dictator, Dr António Salazar (in power, 1932-68), with the Vatican in 1940 had special significance for East Timor since they led to the establishment of a separate diocese in Dili (September 1940), with the long-serving Dom Jaime Garcia Goulart, who had arrived in East Timor in 1933, becoming its first Apostolic Administrator (1941-45) and then its Bishop (1945-59). In the three decades which elapsed between the second World War and the Indonesian invasion, the Catholic Church in East Timor deepened its links with the local Timorese inhabitants becoming the principal vehicle for the spread of Lusophone culture in the predominantly animist highlands. Given the high prestige in which the religious (i.e. priests, friars, lay brothers, nuns, and catechists) were held by the indigenous population, the Church usually exercised considerably more influence over the local populations than

the colonial authorities. Villagers were quick to acknowledge the local priest as a community leader and often sought his protection against the abuses of government officials and traditional chiefs (*liurai*). Local priests thus played a crucial mediating role between ordinary Timorese and the colonial authorities. This was especially evident in their attempts to mitigate the worst effects of the forced labour (*corvée*) introduced by the energetic governor, José Celestino da Silva (in office, 1894-1908), in the state-linked SAPT (Sociedade Agrícola Pátria e Trabalho) coffee plantations, and to soften the burden of the poll tax (*imposto de capitacão*), which was first levied by his successor, Eduardo Marques (in office, 1908-11), on all Timorese males between eighteen and sixty (Jannisa, 1997: 141; Mubyarto 1991, 31-32). One could even say that by the end of Portuguese rule in 1975, the more liberal Jesuit-led section of the Church had become a cautious agent for social and political change.

By the early 1970s, conversions were running at around 10,000 each year, and there had been a more than threefold increase in the number of practising Timorese Christians—from around 60,000 (or 13 per cent of a total population of about 460,000) in 1952, to 196,670 (or 29 per cent of a Church-estimated population of 659,102) in 1973 (Dunn, 1983: 50). The Catholic establishment had also grown markedly both in size and in the number of Timorese priests: in 1952, out of 34 missionaries in Timor, 28 were secular priests only one of whom was not Portuguese, whereas in 1974, the Church had 44 priests, 25 of whom were Timorese, as well as eight Timorese brothers (i.e. friars), and 49 nuns (the Canossians being most prominent). By this time, there were 160 teachers and 37 catechists distributed through three diocesan parishes and eighty mission posts (Dunn 1983, 50)¹. In terms of its élite culture and internal power structures, Timor had become virtually a Catholic 'state', Catholicism being the religion of the leaders and the tiny handful of *assimilados/civilizados* ('assimilated' or 'civilized', i.e. Portuguese-speaking Timorese and *mestiços*), who numbered some 1,463 (or 0.25 per cent of the total population) in the mid-1970s (Weatherbee, 1966: 684; Mubyarto, 1991: 46).

The depth of Timorese commitment to Catholicism and the nature of their solidarity with the Church in the late colonial period should not be exaggerated however. True, important initiatives had been taken by members of the secular clergy, like Fr Manuel Patrício, to develop a Tetun catechism and Tetun translations of the Bible for use in small prayer groups, initiatives which would later (post-1975) bear fruit in the development of a full-scale Tetun liturgy (personal communication, Fr Filomeno Jacob, SJ, Oxford, 21 October 1997). There were also many priests and regulars [i.e. ordained friars, monks, and nuns] who were well versed in the local languages of the dominant ethnic groups in Timor, such as Mambai, Fátaluku, Makassae, and Bunaq (Tocodédé). But the fact that, up to 1975, the language of the liturgy still remained predominantly Latin and Portuguese, meant that the Church continued to be a rather foreign institution in the eyes of most highland Timorese. For these people, the process of 'conversion' was often rather shallow: away from Díli and the main market towns, reverence for *lulik* (tribal/family heirlooms) and animist rituals continued to flourish amongst Timorese Catholics despite Church prohibitions. Double marriage ceremonies, for example, were the norm in most highland areas, the first taking place in the local parish church and the second, and more significant for the Timorese participants, in the *umalulik* (heirloom 'house') in their extended village communities (*knua*).

The Church's ability to inspire genuine loyalty amongst the animist majority in the colonial era was thus problematic at best. Indeed, it was not helped by the way in which the Church tended to look after its own when political crises struck, such as the February 1942 Japanese landings when the majority of Church personnel (some 20 priests and 50 nuns from eight different orders)—under instructions from their superiors and following frantic diplomatic efforts to ensure their safety—sought to leave the colony for Australia or Portugal (Archer, 1995:121).

Many of these missionaries would eventually return to Timor after the war to lay the basis for a revived Catholic Church. Amongst them was the highly influential Dom Jaime Garcia Goulart (already appointed as the first Bishop of the newly created diocese of Díli while in Australia), whose prestige can still be felt in the territory to this day. The fact that some priests, particularly Jesuits, were prepared to voice open criticism of the Salazar (1932-68) and Caetano (1968-74) dictatorships was important for the younger generation. This was especially the case with the tiny Portuguese-educated élite in Díli, many of whom were influenced in the late 1960s and early 1970s by the Jesuit-run weekly, *Seara* ('Fields of Wheat' in Portuguese). As a Catholic newspaper it stood outside the normal censorship laws (strictly enforced at that time by the ever watchful PIDE [Polícia Internacional e de Defesa do Estado] state security service), and its columns carried important contributions about contemporary issues such as the traditional marriage laws, housing problems, scientific humanism versus Christianity, the morality of violence, and the principles of education. It also gave regular space to the teaching of Tetun, thus implicitly criticising the state education system which insisted on the sole use of Portuguese (Jolliffe, 1978: 55-56). Despite its closure in March 1973—at PIDE insistence—many of its local contributors, in particular José Ramos-Horta, Mari Alkatiri, Xavier do Amaral, Manuel Carrascalão, Francisco Borja da Costa and Nicolau Lobato, would later achieve prominence in post-April 1974 Timor once the 'Carnation Revolution' in Lisbon had permitted the formation of political parties and the beginnings of open debate on Timor's political future (Jolliffe, 1978: 56).

By August 1975, at the time of the outbreak of the three-week UDT (União Democrática Timorense: Timorese Democratic Union)-Fretilin civil war, the postwar changes in the Catholic Church in East Timor and the deeper bond which had been forged between the members of the religious orders and the East Timorese people were already evident: only a handful of priests and religious sought refuge overseas (and many of these left reluctantly on the orders of their superiors—the then Bishop, Dom Ribeiro (in office, 1959-77), personally escorting nuns to the quayside in Díli for passage to Australia during a brief cease-fire in the bitter street fighting), the majority staying on to support the local population in their hour of need.

The Indonesian invasion (7 December 1975) and its aftermath

On 7 December 1975, Indonesia launched a massive air and sea invasion of Díli. This would lead, by 1979, to a full-scale military occupation of East Timor and one of the worst civilian losses of life in post-war history (between a third and a quarter of the pre-1975 population of 700,000+ are thought to have perished, see Defert, 1992: 147-50). 'They floated down like angels, and behaved like devils' was how the deeply traumatized

last Portuguese Bishop of Díli, Dom Joaquim Ribeiro, put it as he watched the Indonesian paratroopers drop from the sky from the windows of his episcopal palace in downtown Díli.

Dom Ribeiro had been deeply critical of Fretilin and the revolutionary tendencies within the party, tendencies which had been quickened by the return of young Trotskyist and Marxist students from Lisbon in late 1974. Already, on 25 January 1975, he had published a pastoral letter, signed by his Presbyteral Council, which had warned of the dangers of 'materialistic and atheistic Communism and socialistic Marxism which is seeking to extinguish [the] positive values of the Timorese people' (Jolliffe, 1978: 93). He also reminded his flock that the Church forbade Catholics to vote for Communists or socialists, a prohibition which he reiterated in many of his subsequent homilies and sermons (Jolliffe, 1978: 93; personal communication, Fr Filomeno Jacob, SJ, 21 October 1997). This marked the beginning of a series of active interventions by the Church in the increasingly turbulent politics of East Timor, interventions which culminated in Ribeiro's refusal to mediate between the two warring parties at the time of East Timor's brief civil war.

By this time, Fretilin was proposing a complete separation of Church and state, following the example of the MPLA (Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola) in Angola and FRELIMO (Frente Revolucionária de Libertação de Moçambique) in Mozambique. In the 'pure democracy' which they hoped to build in East Timor there could be no place for a privileged colonial-style Church. Henceforth, in their view, the Church would be expected to take an equal place with the animist (*lulik*) religion of the Timorese majority, as well as with the then tiny (less than 500-strong) Muslim community, mainly based in the Arab quarter (Kampong Alor) of Díli (Jolliffe, 1978: 94).

Following the Indonesian invasion and the desperate struggle which followed, a rapid reassessment of the character of the Fretilin leadership began to take place. Many priests and religious were now not able to leave, and some went with the population to the mountains to escape the Indonesian army. Their links with Portugal severed, and influenced by the post-April 1974 rise of Timorese nationalism, they were forced to reconstruct their Church amidst the carnage and destruction of war. The recently published memoir of a senior Fretilin commander, Paulino Gama (a.k.a. Mauk Muruk), sheds interesting light on this development when he tells how one of the first accounts of events in East Timor following the Indonesian invasion and the 1977-79 'Annihilation Circle' campaign was given by a recently exiled Timorese priest in Australia, Fr Francisco Mária Fernandes, who broadcast on Radio Australia in June 1979 (Gama, 1995: 102).

Another such witness was the elderly Fr Leoneto do Rego, a Portuguese priest who was forced by Falintil (Forças Armadas de Libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste/Armed Forces for the National Liberation of East Timor), the armed wing of Fretilin, to accompany them to the mountains in December 1975. After his return to Portugal in 1978, he gave an account of life in these Fretilin-controlled areas, stressing how he came to admire the skill with which they introduced new high-altitude crops (maize, manioc, potatoes), continued their schools (and built more new ones than the Portuguese had done in the previous five centuries), developed their adult literacy programmes, and established

a health service using traditional medicines extracted from local plants. In Father do Rego's view, Fretilin 'were conscious of what they were fighting for—independence. If they hadn't cared, then everything would have been finished' (Taylor, 1991: 82).

Forged initially in the bonds which developed between the handful of priests, like Father do Rego, who were with Fretilin in the mountains between 1975 and 1976, and the populations in the guerrilla zones, the link between the Church and the resistance soon developed into a deep and many-sided relationship. This provided an essential moral dimension to the nationalist struggle, a relationship later characterized by the Timorese resistance leader, Xanana Gusmão, as the very 'backbone of the resistance' (Gusmão, 1995: 84). In the aftermath of the terrible 'Annihilation Circle' operation (September 1977–November 1978), which destroyed Fretilin's guerrilla bases on the Mt. Matebian range, Xanana had carefully rebuilt the anti-Indonesian guerrilla movement, and he was later to acknowledge the Church's central contribution to this process in a conversation with the Australian lawyer, Robert Domm, in September 1990, when he met him at his mountain hideout near Aínaro some fifty kilometres south of Díli. In Xanana's words, the clergy 'had played an indirect role, strengthening patriotic consciousness', so that 'the people had [developed] an enormous trust in the Catholic Church. They feel that it isn't isolated from their suffering, but in solidarity with them. [Because of their support for the Timorese] many priests have been threatened with shooting [by the Indonesian military] . . .' (Domm, 1990: 8).

This trust between clergy and people had been deepened by the feeling of isolation and abandonment experienced by the Timorese religious in the face of the seeming indifference of the wider Catholic Church. In 1981, in a *Reflection* addressed to the religious orders in Indonesia, the Timorese priests spoke bitterly of the failure of the Catholic Church—both in Indonesia and in Rome—to 'state openly and officially their solidarity with the Church, people and religious of East Timor. Perhaps this has been the heaviest blow for us [. . .] We felt stunned by this silence, which seemed to allow us to die deserted' (Archer, 1995: 123).

Conscious of its obligations to the nearly five million-strong Catholic community in Indonesia proper (many of whom lived in the province of Nusa Tenggara Timur adjacent to East Timor), the Vatican has always shown itself reluctant to speak too openly for fear of jeopardizing its relations with Jakarta. Thus, while it did not recognize Indonesia's annexation—the official Vatican line was that Timor 'had freed itself from Portugal but had not yet joined Indonesia'—it was not prepared to condemn Indonesian human rights abuses or push for a genuine act of self-determination in the territory. The most it was willing to do was stress the need 'for consideration to be given in every circumstance to the ethnic, religious, and cultural identity of the [Timorese] people', a message which the Pope reiterated each time a new Indonesian ambassador presented his credentials at the Holy See (Taylor, 1990: 47, 75–76; Catholic Commission, 1993: 25, 28, 32).

When Mgr Martinho da Costa Lopes (1919–91; in office, May 1977–May 1983), the outspoken Timorese Apostolic Administrator, began to openly criticize Indonesian actions, especially the massacre at the Shrine of St. Antony at Laclúta to the south-east of Díli in September 1981 in which 500 people, mostly women and children, were dashed to death against rocks and trees, the Vatican bowed to pressure from Jakarta to get rid of him

(he later died in exile in Lisbon on 27 February 1991 'of neglect and a broken heart') (*New York Times*, 5 March 1991; Taylor, 1991: 205).

His replacement, Mgr Belo, who had served briefly as Master of Novices at the Fatumaca Technical College (a Salesian institution) near Baucau, was thought initially by Jakarta and the Vatican to be more biddable. But they were soon proven wrong when Belo showed himself just as opposed to Indonesian actions as his predecessor. Already in December 1984, he was writing that 'despite all the forces against us, we continue to hold [...] that the only solution to the Timor conflict is a political and diplomatic one, and this should include, above all, the respect for the right of a people for self-determination' (CIIR, 1992: 27-28; Archer, 1995: 125). The following year, he was even bolder, putting his name to a public *Statement* by the Timorese Council of Priests addressed to the Indonesian authorities which reiterated the right of East Timor's population to a legitimate act of self-determination and warned explicitly of the threat of ethnocide in East Timor ('[The] attempt to Indonesianise the Timorese people through vigorous campaigns to promote *pancasila*, through schools or the media, by alienating the people from their world view, means the gradual murder of Timorese culture. To kill the culture is to kill the people') (*Timor Link* (CIIR), 2 [1985]; Archer, 1995: 124).

Although he was forced on this occasion to repudiate his signature, he was later to return to the charge with his December 1987 pastoral letter, in which he accused the Indonesian military of 'regularly practising torture' (*New York Times*, 11 February 1990, 23). But it was his private letter to the UN Secretary-General (then Sr Perez de Cuellar) in February 1989, which stressed that 'the people of East Timor must be allowed to express their views on their future through a plebiscite' (Archer, 1995: 125), which aroused the most violent response from the Indonesian authorities. This time, however, he stood firm, even making his position more explicit by stating that he was not advocating one political solution over another, but affirming a basic principle. His courage in the face of numerous threats, including at least three assassination attempts (in June 1989, October 1991, and December 1996) (Pilger, 1994: 16; Siagian and Tukan, 1997: 237; *Tapol Bulletin*, No.139, February 1997: 21)—he has long warned that he may go the way of Archbishop Oscar Romero, the Salvadorian Church leader gunned down in 1980 while saying mass—has been an inspiration for many Timorese, and a living affirmation of the solidarity between Church and people.

Refuges in the storm: the colégios

This solidarity between Church and people in East Timor has been especially noticeable in the way in which the Church has cared for the wives, widows, children, and orphans of the Timorese resistance fighters. This has been done principally through the institution of the *colégios*, Catholic centres consisting of a parish church, a convent for priests, ordained and lay brothers, and nuns, a boarding school for boys or girls, and a large tract of agricultural land, usually partly rented out to local farmers and partly cultivated by the students themselves to grow food for their school kitchen. Venilale, the once elegant Portuguese *posto* (seat of provincial administration), a town built on the north-western escarpment of Mt Matebian near Baucau, is the site of one such *colégio*, where the children and orphans of *guerrilheiros* have been looked after. When the veteran British

travel writer Norman Lewis visited there in 1992, Xanana's second wife (who had shared his life in the bush), Justina, and her two young children (one the offspring of a forced union with her Indonesian prison guard after her surrender), were in residence, along with 200 other boys and girls between the ages of two and twelve. With many suffering from tuberculosis (a disease which is reported to affect over eighty per cent of the East Timorese rural population) and malaria due to poor diet and their years spent on the run in the forest with their parents, most of whom were now either dead or in prison, the nuns had to act as nurses, mothers, teachers, and sisters all rolled into one. But what immediately impressed was the loving energy with which these roles were accomplished. Here was the striking Filipina nun, the 32-year-old Sister Marlene, in her austere Salesian habit, breaking into a vigorous Portuguese folk-dance with a class of young orphan girls; here too was the Italian Sister Paola Battigliola, with her tiny triangular face of the Neapolitan witch-fairy *a buffona*, carrying out all the domestic tasks, including the management of the kitchen with its massive cooking pots and open fireplaces, with 'a miracle of efficiently applied effort' (Lewis, 1993: 106-07, 118). Amidst all the organized evil of the Indonesian occupation, they shone forth like stars in a jet-black sky. Fortunate indeed were the children in their care—amidst the tens of thousands of orphans in Timor, they at least would know the meaning of love.

This network of *colégios* and Church centres caring for the families of resistance fighters also played an interesting role in keeping alive a knowledge of Portuguese language and customs. For a younger Timorese generation denied access to such knowledge in Indonesian schools and in an oppressive occupation society dominated by the alien culture of inner-island Indonesia (especially Java), the Timorese Church offered a unique cultural space. Here not only was the Lusophone inheritance of the pre-1975 era honoured, but respect was also shown for pre-Christian Timorese belief systems, the local veneration for *lulik* (heirlooms) and the empowering energy of the cockerel dance in which the young male dancers, under the guidance of a shaman, take on the elemental vitality of fighting cocks. 'These people are godly in a truly religious sense', a Salesian nun explained to Lewis in Venilale, 'we have learnt to coexist with their animism'. Watching the pagan symbols of the moon displayed in full view of the cross during the dance celebration at the time of Bishop Belo's visit to the mountain town, Lewis concluded that 'here the Church was prepared to show not merely tolerance in its handling of shamanistic competition, but had [actually] sided with it in the face of government disfavour' (Lewis, 1993: 104). Indeed, the iconography of the Catholic Church with its crucifixes, statues of the Blessed Virgin, grottos and *via dolorosa* structures soon came to serve as substitutes for the multifarious forms of ancestor worship and *lulik* veneration which had become increasingly difficult to carry out in Timor because of their potential association with Fretilin gatherings (Aditjondro, 1994: 35).

The way in which the Church has recently been prepared to hold open-air masses and prayer meetings at sites revered by practitioners of traditional animist religion is especially interesting here. One such event took place on 10 October 1993 on East Timor's most sacred mountain, Mt Matebian. Long viewed as the home of the spirits of the dead and a special site of animist worship, it was 'reclaimed' for Christ when a white marble statue of the risen Saviour (as 'King of Kings') was erected at the summit and a Eucharist Mass celebrated to over 5,000 communicants (Tukan and de Sousa, 1997: 321-

24).³ Another such event was planned for 6-7 October 1997 at the summit of Mt Ramelau, East Timor's highest mountain (10,000 feet) and a place intimately associated with Timorese nationalist aspirations (*Foho Ramelau* ['Mount Ramelau'] is the title of the banned Timorese national anthem). Unfortunately—and predictably—the two-day gathering, which had brought together some 20,000-30,000 people in a joint ceremony designed to unite the traditional animist religions with the teachings of the Catholic Church, was aborted by a murderous attack by an assailant thought to be a member of the Indonesian military-inspired Garda Paksi (Upholders of Integration [Penegak Integrasi Guard]) (Kohen, 1997: 1374).

The 'new' Church of East Timor and the changing face of the East Timorese resistance, 1989-97

Just as the 'new' East Timorese Church was becoming involved in the Timorese struggle for national identity and culture, so human rights and justice also began to bulk larger in the concerns of Timorese priests and religious. In contrast to the attitude of Dom Joaquim Ribeiro and the conservative Catholic clergy in the pre-invasion era, the Church now began to define itself in terms of its service to the people rather than the state (Jolliffe, 1978: 93; Archer, 1995: 120ff.). This new outspokenness, especially the willingness of the Church to condemn Indonesian atrocities, such as the September 1981 Laclúta massacre in the central highlands and the Kraras killings of August 1983, demanded courage of a high order as the fate of Bishop Belo's predecessor, Mgr Costa Lopes, so graphically illustrated.

Throughout the period from December 1975 to January 1989, when East Timor (with the exception of seven eastern districts between Baucau, Viqueque, and Lospalos where fighting was still raging) was officially 'opened' to Indonesians and foreigners by Jakarta, the Catholic Church was the *only* local institution capable of communicating independently with the outside world and of articulating the deep trauma of the East Timorese people. Centrally important here was the special relationship with Rome which the East Timorese Church enjoyed following the invasion. Since East Timor remained the subject of an international dispute (between 1975 and 1982, there were no less than ten UN Security Council and General Assembly resolutions on the issue demanding—*inter alia*—an immediate Indonesian military withdrawal and a genuine act of self-determination), the Vatican decided to administer the diocese directly rather than attach it to the Bishops' Conferences of Indonesia or Portugal.⁴ This enabled the Church—in Archer's words—to offer the East Timorese a 'cultural [and] public space' not tainted by the Indonesian authorities (Archer, 1995: 127).

One area where the Church has made a crucial contribution to the growth of East Timorese nationalism has been that of language. Pivotal here was the decision taken by the Catholic hierarchy in East Timor in 1981, when Portuguese was banned by the Indonesian authorities, to use Tetun, the local lingua franca, and not Indonesian, as the language of Church services and liturgy. This decision, which was endorsed by the Vatican in October of that year, has raised Tetun from being a mere local language in parts of East Timor to becoming, in Anderson's words 'for the first time, the language of "East Timorese" religion and identity' (Anderson, 1993: 27). Indeed, recent observers

have confirmed the way language is used on Church occasions to underscore the intense rejection of the Indonesian presence by the East Timorese. Thus, in a Mass celebrated in September 1993 in the southern parish of Suai, the congregation refused to join in singing hymns in Indonesian (*Bahasa Indonesia*) led by visiting Indonesian seminarians from Atambua in West Timor (Catherine Scott [CIIR], personal communication, October 1993).

Whereas Fretilin and the armed struggle waged by its military wing, Falintil, had been at the heart of anti-Indonesian resistance during the first fifteen years (1975-89) of East Timor's occupation, by the late 1980s and early to mid-1990s, Church events had become a crucial reference point for the new student-led independence movement (Boavida, unpublished: 97). Most striking here were the East Timorese youths' pro-independence demonstration during the Papal Mass at Taci-tolu (a notorious execution site) outside Díli on 12 October 1989, the protest on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary celebration of the diocese of Díli on 4 September 1990—an event which the student leader, Donaciano Gomes, refers to in his recently published account of the Timorese '*intifada*' (Gomes, 1995: 108)—and, most tragically, the commemoration at the Santa Cruz cemetery, which began with an early morning mass at the Motael Church and ended when Indonesian troops opened fire indiscriminately on the packed mourners in the cemetery, a bloodbath which is estimated to have left at least 271 dead, 382 wounded, and 250 'disappeared' (Paz é Possível, 1992: 3; Amnesty International, 1994: 13).

Whereas, for the 1974-75 generation of East Timorese leaders, almost all of them Portuguese educated and proud of their *assimilado* status, Catholicism was less a deeply faith-based relationship than a mark of social distinction, for the second generation of student leaders, educated in the Indonesian school system, the Church and its teachings often inspired a more personal commitment. This commitment fused an intense sense of East Timorese nationalism (with adherence to Catholicism setting indigenous Timorese apart from the mainly Muslim [or nominally Muslim] inner island Indonesian occupation forces and transmigrants) and a belief in the redeeming power of the Cross—East Timor's own 'dark night of the soul' being equated with the sufferings of Christ at Gethsemane and Golgotha. In much the same way as in nineteenth-century Ireland or Poland, the individual experience of suffering and oppression in East Timor shaped a deep personal faith, a faith in which redemption and transcendence had both a personal and a national dimension.

These sentiments were by no means confined to the Timorese élite. The *maubere*, the hitherto predominantly animist highland Timorese, were also affected; the vast majority opted for Catholicism when they were required to adopt a religion (i.e. Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism) recognized by Indonesia's state ideology, *pancasila*. In two decades, the proportion of nominal Catholics shot up from around 30 per cent to close on 90 per cent of the Timorese population—from 220,314 in 1974 to over 620,000 in 1994. As Ben Anderson has pointed out (Anderson, 1993: 27), with regard to the Catholic Church in East Timor, Jakarta finds itself in a strange bind for it has found itself both wanting and distrusting Catholicism's spread, recognising, on the one hand, that as official members of the Catholic Church the population will enjoy protection according to the logic of the religious provisions of the *pancasila* state ideology and, on the other

hand, fearing the emergence of a popular Catholicism, which has become such a powerful expression of common suffering.

An interview with Bishop Belo by a researcher from the Catholic Institute for International Relations in September 1993 (*Timor Link*, 1993: 7) gives a useful insight into the situation of the East Timorese Church in the early 1990s.

Q 'How [can] the Timorese people express their faith?'

Bishop Belo 'There are many ways: their presence in the Church, in the Eucharist, in the chapels. They also pray in their own homes, [use] the rosary [and] organise processions with a statue of the Virgin, which they carry from house to house. . . . [But] other kinds of group meeting, to sit down together to read the Bible and to pray is not allowed because the [Indonesian] military don't trust them. They think they will discuss politics—this is not allowed. But really, the Catholic faith for the people is a kind of symbol to unite them, it is a way to express the fact that they are Timorese, they don't like any other religion [and] they [certainly] don't like Indonesia.'

Q 'Have you tried complaining about this lack of freedom for Church activities?'

Bishop Belo 'They say they don't beat anyone, they respect the people, that they work for the prosperity of the people. But for me it is a pure lie. From [May] 1983 [i.e. the time of Belo's appointment as Apostolic Administrator] until now, I hear only lies from them.'

Q 'I would have thought from the doctrine of "pancasila" that people [would be] free to worship?'

Bishop Belo 'This is the theory, but in practice it is very difficult because they are intent on Islamisation. I hear[d] yesterday [that] there are about 400 [East Timorese] boys [who have been] taken to Java to attend Islamic centres of studies [i.e. *pesantrèn*] The theory is all very well, but in practice [it's] different'.

In this oppressive situation, where the very life of the Church is threatened by the presence of what seems, to most Timorese, a foreign (Javanese Muslim) military occupation, parishes, especially those run by East Timorese priests, cannot function in the normal sense of Christian Community. Instead, the priests have to operate under great pressure, running vast parishes (especially to the south and west of Díli) whose numbers are constantly swollen by refugees from other parishes run by Indonesian priests or foreign missionaries. Even though this often means travelling much further for church services, East Timorese parishioners are prepared to do this in order to hear Mass and receive the Eucharist from the hands of their fellow countrymen.

During the last few years, in particular following the 12 November 1991 massacre, a new development has further complicated the political position of the East Timorese Church: the intensification of provocations against the Catholic religion orchestrated by members of the Indonesian security forces. This was already evident as early as 1991-92,

with intimidation and insults being levelled against East Timorese nuns both in their convents and outside, and attacks on Church property—the smashing of the statue of the Virgin in Díli's Lecidere park on Christmas Day 1992 being one of the most outrageous. But events began to escalate in 1994 when, in late June, two off-duty Indonesian soldiers joined East Timorese communicants at a Mass in the parish church of Remexio to the south of Díli, and, having taken the Communion host, proceeded to spit it on the floor and trample on it, an incident which sparked a riot with troops from the local Indonesian garrison having to be called in to fire over the heads of churchgoers to prevent a public lynching. Less than a month later (13 July 1994), another incident occurred in Díli when taunts by three Indonesian youths against East Timorese nuns on the university campus caused another serious affray involving Indonesian troops and riot police. An attempt by East Timorese students to stage a protest march from the university to the local parliament the following day ended in bloodshed when troops attacked the marchers with clubs. Twenty students were reported injured, three seriously. According to local residents, troops smashed a cross, ripped Catholic banners, and tore rosaries from the necks of the protesters (Wagstaff, 1994[b]; *Independent* [London], 15 July 1994)⁵.

The burgeoning number of inner island Indonesian settlers and transmigrants—by 1995, there were an estimated 180,000 Indonesians in East Timor (50,000 of them in Díli [population 132,000] alone) out of a total population of 830,000 (*Tapol Bulletin*, October 1995, quoting Mauro di Nicola in *Uniya*, Spring 1995)⁶—have certainly exacerbated these intra-ethnic and religious conflicts in East Timor. The violence was by no means one-sided: the shooting, by members of the East Timorese resistance in Lospalos in the extreme east of the territory in 1994, of two members of an Indonesian Student Regiment (Menwa) who had been deemed too provocative in their zeal for Islamic proselytization, and the burning of mosques and prayer halls (*mushala*)—seven were set on fire in September and October 1995, along with two Protestant churches (frequented by members of the Indonesian security forces and transmigrants), in the aftermath of the 2 September 1995 Maliana incident (see n.7 below)—are sufficient indication that violence against religious property and personnel was not the sole prerogative of the Indonesians.

In the case of the East Timorese, however, religion was usually not the principle issue. The economic impact of the Indonesian occupation—especially the arrival of large numbers of inner island migrants, Buginese from South Sulawesi in particular—coupled with the increasing economic marginalization of the East Timorese—was keenly felt by Timorese of all classes. 'What's the good of school if there's no way we are going to get a decent job?', one Timorese school-leaver complained in 1989, 'These days all office jobs are closed to us. If the Regional Office Head is a newcomer [i.e. an inner island Indonesian], he will only be interested in having his relatives, or at least people from the same region, working in his office' (Mubyarto, 1991: 55). Amongst the educated East Timorese, these newcomers were known as the 'Battalion 702' (the numbers referring to their leaving for work early in the morning [7], not bringing any benefit to the local economy [0], and then going home early in the afternoon [2]) (Carey and Bentley, 1995: 14). But it was not only educated Timorese who suffered—the *maubere* were also affected. Nowhere was this situation more poignantly illustrated than at the municipal market (Mercado Lama) in Díli, a facility built by the Portuguese for East Timorese traders during the colonial period, where, after the opening of East Timor in December

1988 to Indonesian migrants, nearly all kiosks were taken over by Bugis merchants, the East Timorese being relegated to the local car-park. It was perhaps no coincidence that this market was singled out for particular attack during the post-2 September 1995 disturbances (it was severely damaged by fire on 9 September 1995), and—after its partial rebuilding—later burnt to the ground at the time of the 29 May 1997 general elections (*Tapol Bulletin*, No. 141, July 1997, 2).

Serious though these economic grievances are, it is the political aspect of the escalating religious conflict in East Timor which has the gravest implications for the Catholic Church. This can be seen most vividly in official—and unofficial—Indonesian reactions to the riots which engulfed East Timor in September and October 1995, following reports of the public abuse of Catholicism by an Indonesian Muslim prison guard at Maliana jail.⁷ Instead of looking to the underlying economic and political reasons for East Timorese unrest, government spokesmen attempted to explain the problems in the territory as examples of ethnic and religious conflict (SARA—*Suku Agama Ras Antar-Golongan*—Ethnicity, Religion, Race, Inter-Group/Class [strife]), conflicts explicitly outlawed under the Indonesian state *pancasila* ideology. This explanation was most vigorously propagated in the Jakarta daily, *Republika*, mouthpiece of the government-linked Association of Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals (ICMI—*Ikatan Cendekiawan Muslimin Indonesia*) whose chairman was President Suharto's protégé, Minister of Research and Technology (now President), Ir B.J. Habibie. 'If all the information in our possession were to be made public', confided a *Republika* columnist on 17 September, '[then] I fear that many Muslims would be very angry. If this anger is not contained, the disturbances in East Timor could erupt everywhere' (*Tapol Bulletin*, No.131, October 1995, 21). At the same time, Dr Amien Rais, the influential chairman of Muhammadiyah, the progressive Muslim mass movement which counts a membership of more than 25 million,⁸ spoke of the need to defend the 'embattled' Islamic minority in East Timor, and rounded on Bishop Belo for his call for East Timor to be made a special 'Catholic Region' (ETAN, 1995: 19-21), forcing the Bishop to clarify his position by stating that he wanted a 'region in which the Catholic religion is predominant, a region where there are also Protestant and Muslim Timorese, . . . [where] special attention [is] given to the religious, historical, and cultural identity of the people of East Timor . . . not one that is exclusively Catholic' (ETAN, 1995: 21).

Conclusions

With new pressures bearing down on the Catholic Church in East Timor, and with the deepening conflict between the East Timorese and the immigrant Indonesian community now becoming an issue amongst the modernist Muslim élite in Indonesia itself, the ability of Bishop Belo and the East Timorese religious to cleave to a principled—non-political—stand is becoming increasingly difficult. The key question here is clearly one of the Church's support for the popular desire for an act of self-determination, the question over which Bishop Belo aroused so much ire by his 6 February 1989 letter to the UN Secretary-General and which he still adheres to up to the present.⁹ On the one side, amongst the East Timorese priests and many of their non-Indonesian foreign colleagues, there is a general agreement that self-determination (or, at the very least, some form of

effective autonomy along the lines of Puerto Rico's relationship with the United States, or that of Madeira and the Azores to Portugal) is a realizable goal. For most of the Indonesian priests in East Timor (of whom there were around thirty in the mid-1990s), however, such aspirations are regarded as both illegitimate and unrealistic. On this vital matter the East Timorese Church is thus deeply divided, and unless these divisions are somehow resolved, it could again, in the eyes of the Timorese, become a Church which is partly foreign.

Particularly worrying here are the diminishing numbers of East Timorese priests when compared to those from Indonesia proper. It will be nearly a decade before the next generation of local-born priests are fully ordained, the lack of a local training seminary — following the destruction of that at Daré by the Indonesians in December 1975—being keenly felt.

In the early to mid 1990s, pressures from Jakarta on the Vatican to split the Dili diocese and appoint an Indonesian (the name of the Chinese-Indonesian Jesuit Fr Markus Wanandi, brother of Yusuf Wanandi [a.k.a Liem Bian-Kie], was widely touted) as the second Bishop, continued to increase. This was seen as a way of both reducing Bishop Belo's influence and hastening the inclusion of East Timor in the Indonesian Bishops' Conference. A message along these lines appears to have been conveyed to the Vatican by the Indonesian Minister of Religion, Tarmizi Taher, when he had an audience with the Pope on 26 October 1995 (Wagstaff 1994[a]; ETAN, 1995: 23), but does not seem to have had much affect. Although the Vatican agreed to the creation of a new diocese in East Timor with its seat at Baucau to serve the three most easterly districts (*kabupatèn*) of Baucau, Viqueque, and Lautem, the new appointee, Mgr Basílio do Nascimento, was an East Timorese not an Indonesian.¹⁰ Furthermore, any suggestion that the Vatican might accept that East Timor be eventually joined to the Indonesian Bishops' Conference was quashed when the President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, visited the territory in February 1996. Not only did the cardinal (a French Basque with an acute sense of the plight of struggling ethnic minorities) give a resounding endorsement to Bishop Belo's achievements as a pastor, but he also criticized the human rights abuses and 'provocations' of the Indonesian military, reiterating the need for a resolution to the East Timor conflict which would 'satisfy the legitimate aspirations of the Timorese people [for the] recognition of their special cultural and religious identity' (Etchegaray, 1996, 16). This strong support in Rome both for Bishop Belo and the East Timorese demand for a separate religious and cultural identity was further strengthened when Cardinal Etchegaray came to Oslo with a large Vatican delegation to celebrate the award of the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize to the joint East Timorese honorands—Bishop Belo and José Ramos-Horta—on 10 December 1996.

Sensing perhaps that the tide of international opinion had now turned decisively against Jakarta, the Indonesian military have redoubled their efforts to crack down on the East Timorese opposition. Scores of arrests were made following Belo's return to Dili on 24 December 1996, when a huge crowd (estimated to be well in excess of 100,000—even more than had turned out to greet the Pope in October 1989) came to Comoro airport to welcome the Bishop home. There were even indications that Indonesian military intelligence were contemplating his assassination at that time (Negreiros, 1997, and see below n. 2). In April 1997, when the present author visited East Timor, the weight of

the Indonesian military presence was plainly evident with new infantry battalions having been brought in to boost the 17,000-strong garrison, soldiers patrolling everywhere in full battle-dress, and the unmarked white Toyota landcruisers of the intelligence services and special forces (*Kopassus*) keeping constant vigil (Carey, 1998: 85-91). In the same month, a strong resolution was passed in the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva (16 April 1997)—the first since 10 March 1993 (when a critical motion was voted in the aftermath of the 12 November 1991 Santa Cruz massacre)—condemning the continuing human rights abuses and calling on Jakarta to allow the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture to visit the territory (*Timor Link* (London), No. 39, April 1997: 2-3).

In this continuing tragedy, the Catholic Church in East Timor remains central to the search for a peaceful resolution with the Vatican playing an important facilitating role in the delicate negotiations which now involve not only Lisbon, Jakarta, and the United Nations, but also international figures such as former President Mandela of South Africa (*Jornal de Notícias* [Lisbon], 3 August 1997) and the East Timorese themselves. In East Timor, two recent developments have increased the Church's ability to monitor events: first, the establishment in 1996 of its own diocesan Justice and Peace Commission (*Comissão Justiça e Paz Diocese Díli*) in Díli, which has given it the means of documenting the ongoing human rights abuses and liaising more effectively with human rights groups outside East Timor; and second, the launch of its own Catholic radio station, 'The Voice of Our Lady' (*Suara Naín Feto*), on 2 April 1997, which has enabled it to keep in touch with its parishioners and inform them of events in ways which were not possible before.¹¹ Following Suharto's fall on 21 May 1998, Belo has travelled to Jakarta with his co-Bishop, Dom Basílio do Nascimento, to meet key political leaders, amongst them the new President, B.J. Habibie, Foreign Minister Ali Alatas, the head of the Indonesian Democratic Party (PDI), Megawati Sukarnoputri, and the ailing leader of Nahdlatul Ulama, Indonesia's largest Muslim organization, Abdurrachman Wahid. Belo has also been permitted to have talks with Xanana Gusmão, who was then leader of the Timorese armed resistance, in Jakarta's Cipinang prison. In all these meetings, the future political status of the territory has been high on the agenda. Back in Timor, Belo has also been a key figure in negotiations with the special representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, Jamsheed Marker, who paid a brief visit to Baucau on 19 July 1998. His voice continues to carry great authority throughout the territory both with the younger generation of East Timorese student activists and with the older generation of political leaders, even indeed with the armed resistance. The Catholic Church is, therefore, at the very heart of developments in East Timor remaining the one institution with a significant degree of independence in a now increasingly demoralized Indonesian occupation. Whether it wishes it or not, it is now central to the political future of the territory. Only time will tell whether that future will be one of liberation or bondage.

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Notes

1. By mid-1995, these numbers had grown to 80 priests (29 of whom were Timorese and the rest Indonesians or non-Indonesian foreigners) and 220 religious spread over 30 parishes, 66

mission posts, and 98 pastoral centres, see António Marujo, 'Vaticano Divide Timor ao meio', *Público* (Lisbon), 20 December 1995.

2. The December 1996 attempt on Belo's life is reported to have occurred after his return from Oslo on 24 December 1996, when an off-duty East Timorese corporal, Alfredo dos Santos (a.k.a. Siga), was found with a gun outside Díli cathedral, where Belo was about to celebrate mass. After he was beaten to death by the crowd, his body was dragged into the cathedral and searched, an unsigned cheque for five million *rupiah* being found in his clothes. Such cheques are apparently given to local agents sent on dangerous missions by Indonesian intelligence in East Timor and redeemable (by being signed) after the mission has been successfully carried out, see further *Tapol Bulletin* (London), No. 139 (February 1997), 21.

3. There is now apparently an annual pilgrimage and open-air mass at the spot, personal communication, Fr Rolando Fernandez, Fuiloro, 4 April 1997.

4. In June 1988, when Mgr Belo was installed as Bishop in Díli by the Papal Nuncio to Indonesia, Mgr Francisco Canalini, he was appointed to the titular see of Lorum, a defunct Italian diocese, rather than to a see in East Timor proper (which the Indonesian Conference of Bishops might have claimed as falling under their jurisdiction), see Tukan and de Sousa, 1997: 48-49. It was the same with Mgr Basílio do Nascimento when he was installed as Bishop of Baucau on 19 March 1997 by Canalini's successor, Dom Pietro Sambí, and given the official title of Bishop of Settimunicia, another long defunct Italian diocese, see, 'D. Basílio fala para 50 mil fiéis', *A Capital* (Lisbon), 19 March 1997.

5. See further Seno Gumira Ajidarma, *Eyewitness: protest stories from Indonesia*. Sydney: Imprint, 1995, 81-84, who used a report about a Timorese being forced at bayonet point to swallow a rosary at the time of the 12 November 1991 Santa Cruz massacre, for one of his devastating short stories. For an account of a more recent provocation by the local Muslim community against the majority Catholic (Timorese) population in the East Timorese enclave of Oe-Kussi (Oecussi) in March 1997, see Carey, 1998: p.91, n.23.

6. During a visit to East Timor in April 1997, the present author was given figures by Universitas Timor Timur (University of East Timor) sources which purported to show that out of a total population of 867,000, well over a quarter (250,000) were newcomers, see Carey, 1998:p. 94, n.25.

7. The jailer is reported to have remarked: 'They say that the Catholic religion is the strongest religion in East Timor, but really Catholicism is nothing but a load of big shit: it is nothing but garbage. Every time you pray, you say the rosary, but the rosary is nonsense, the rosary is shit', see ETAN 1995, 18-19.

8. Rais's political influence has been hugely enhanced by his prominent role in leading the popular protests which ultimately forced President Suharto's resignation on 21 May 1998. Indeed, Suharto may have already sensed the growing challenge which Rais posed since just over a year before he was forced to step down, he insisted that Rais resign as head of the advisory board of experts of the influential Indonesian Association of Muslim Intellectuals (ICMI) following his attack on the activities of the US mining firm, Freeport Indonesia (a subsidiary of Freeport McMoRan Copper and Gold Corporation) and on Indonesia's mining policies in general, see John McBeth, 'Line in the sand', *Far Eastern Economic Review* (Hong Kong), 27 March 1997, 14-15.

9. See 'Timor's Belo says Jakarta plan faces opposition', Reuters (Lisbon), 5 August 1998, in which Belo is quoted as saying, 'in the last few months and weeks [i.e. since May 1998], there has been a growing tendency to reject the autonomy offered by the Indonesian Government. The people want a referendum . . . and I'll go along with what the people choose'.

10. Mgr Basílio do Nascimento was born in Suai (East Timor) in 1950 and was educated at the seminary of Nossa Senhora de Fátima in Daré (1964-69) before proceeding to Portugal to study philosophy and theology at the major seminary of Évora (1969-77). After ordination as a priest at Évora in 1977, he spent five years in France (1977-82), where he continued his theological studies and deepened his interest in French literature while serving as the parish priest of Saint Jacques du Haut in Paris. On his return to Portugal in 1982, he became parish priest of Casa Branca (Sousel), Ameixial (Estremoz), and later director of spiritual studies at the major seminary of Évora. In 1994 he returned to East Timor to look after the parish of Aínaro for a year before becoming episcopal vicar of the diocese of Díli, from whence he was appointed Bishop of the newly created diocese of Baucau in December 1995, being officially inaugurated on 19 March 1997, see 'D. Basílio fala para 50 mil fiéis', *A Capital* (Lisbon), 19 March 1997.

11. One way in which the new Catholic radio station—80 per cent of whose broadcasts are educational and on current affairs—avoids the ubiquitous Indonesian censorship and keeps East Timorese in touch with developments elsewhere in the territory is to ask them 'to remember in their prayers' the inhabitants of such-and-such a place, which automatically alerts people to the fact that incidents involving human rights abuses and military actions (either by the East Timorese resistance or the Indonesian occupation forces) have taken place, personal communication, Dr Stephen Baranyi, July 1997.

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THE RHETORIC OF PRACTISING ETHNICITY¹

AMIN SWEENEY

In 1978, a Malay friend of mine who worked in the Malaysian Prime Minister's Department produced from his pocket a document which, he told me, had come into the possession of one of his staff. It was a roneoed² *surat layang* (anonymous circular), much xeroxed, and it was clearly seditious, instigating 'the Chinese' against 'the Malays'. My friend was palpably disturbed by the implications of what he perceived in the circular. Something would have to be done, he stressed, shaking his head. I read through the piece, which was written in English and some 1,800 words in length, sharing his outrage. Later, I realized that the outrage was misdirected. Still, I thought, this is perhaps just an aberration and I put it aside with a Celtic sense of urgency, thinking that I might write something about it one day.

Twenty years later, in 1997, I received another *surat layang*, this time by e-mail. It was sent to a mailing list consisting mainly of Malay college students in the US and the UK, and including a sprinkling of parents and older relatives. I received it in my avuncular role. The tenor of the message was very reminiscent of the first circular. But now, the advances in the technology of the word allowed the sender to add a certain spin. The new medium also made it possible to ascertain the reactions to the circular from a number of recipients. This time, the document was about 1,000 words long and was written in Malay, having purportedly been translated from Chinese. In neither case was there any indication of where a Chinese original might be found.

A rhetorical conundrum

Receiving the second document provided me with the incentive to analyse and compare these texts, for they both rely on the same rhetorical ploy. They both demonstrate that it is possible for us to say something practical about authorial intention; they both provide a reason to re-examine the thorny question of what constitutes good and bad rhetoric, and whether this dichotomy is to be equated with effective and ineffective rhetoric.

This issue is raised by William Brandt in his seminal work *The rhetoric of argumentation*. His exposition is definitely ambivalent. After all, he is forced to part company with the Greeks! Brandt states:

Rhetoric is the art of persuasion. It would seem that its success could only be measured by its suasive effectiveness, and that defective rhetoric might be simply defined as rhetoric that does not move a specific